3
Europe and the Concept of Margin
Jan Ifversen

Introduction

‘There are historically different ways of belonging to Europe and although the centre of Europe might be difficult to identify, it has several peripheries’ – Jacques Rupnik.¹

There are many ways to conceptualize Europe. Already in the early nineteenth century the French historian and politician François Guizot described Europe as a civilization overarching the national civilizations of Europe.² In the mid-twentieth century, another French historian, Lucien Febvre, described it as a historical entity and a fatherland in his lectures at the Collège de France during 1944 and 1945.³ He also emphasized the difficulties of integrating similarities and differences within a concept of Europe. Since then, many scholars, intellectuals and politicians have had to deal with this challenging logic of combining unity and diversity. The political and economic integration of Europe after World War II led to a view of the continent as a supranational unity. Political scientists, however, have often pointed to the complex nature of government structures within the European Union and preferred to talk about multi-level governance to underline the logic. Whether Europe was understood in terms of governance, culture, identity or civilization, differences had to be included. Symbolically, the EU resolved the challenge by adopting the motto unity in diversity in 2000. Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher, proposed a more elegant solution in his plaidoyer for a Europe which will be open to that ‘which it is not, never was and never will be’.⁴ Diversity within Europe has been articulated as a paradox or a tension between universal and particular values, between patriotism and democracy,
between civilization and culture(s), between centres and peripheries. Solutions have ranged from promoting a cosmopolitan Europe ‘based on a paradigm shift whose principle is that diversity is not the problem, but the solution’, as it is stated programmatically, to a Europe based on constitutional patriotism, a Europe of the nations, to Europe as simply overlapping diversity. Diversity itself can appear in many different forms. Apart from the nations that traditionally dominate Europe, regions, cultural minorities, or so-called ‘others’ within Europe – such as migrants and their descendants – can assume this position. In this chapter, I will look at the role of margins within Europe.

The concept of margin belongs to a semantic field which includes similar concepts such as edge, boundary, periphery and fringe. Scores of academic books and articles carrying headings such as *Emotions, Language and Identity on the Margins of Europe, The Frontiers of Europe, Edge of Europe, The Other Europe, European Peripheries: Poetics and Politics of Eastern Europe, Capitalist Diversity on Europe’s Periphery, The Boundaries of Europe, and European Borderlands* demonstrate the importance of conceptualizing differences in Europe as marginality. In this chapter, I will take a closer look at the concept of margin, and how it relates to the larger and complex concept of Europe. I understand margin as both an analytical concept that is used to perceive the paradoxes or tensions embedded in the concept of Europe, and a political concept used to establish positions and map out hegemonies in European politics. The main question I want to address here is why the concept of margin is so effective for understanding Europe and for doing European politics. I will try to answer this question in three steps. The first step is to focus on margin as an analytical concept, and without further ado choose this word as a header for reflections on marginality. A quick glance at the academic literature on asymmetrical differences reveals that at some point periphery seemed to have been a more popular academic term than margin when discussing relations to the centre. However, for what it is worth, an Ngram in Google books from 1950 to 2010 clearly shows that margin always had the upper hand. In a second step, I will investigate further the semantic fields and discourses in which margin and related concepts are being formed. Margin and marginality are expressed in a variety of discourses ranging from the psychological malfunctioning of individuals to geopolitical ordering of international systems. Here we will concentrate on discussing the different ways that margins make meaning for (the concept of) Europe. In the third and final step, we move into politics and reflect on the role of margin as a political concept. When margin becomes...
political at a European scale, it enters a field of ideological and strategic articulations about how to be or not be European.

**Margin as an analytical concept**

As an analytical concept, margin belongs to a theory of marginality, which reflects on how asymmetrical relations are formed and the effects they have on the different actors and positions. The theory is built around the ontological claim that marginality demands centrality. As Noel Parker succinctly points out, ‘without margins (edges), centers (metropolises, capitals) could not be centers; without centers, margins’ marginal position(s) could not be identified’. This structural logic might sound self-evident, but it is very important for understanding how these two positions are constructed and practised. Logically, centres will have a drive to marginalize in order to establish and stabilize their centrality. In his theory of how spaces are produced, Henri Lefebvre speaks of contradictory spaces characterized by a tension between a ‘centrality [that] strives to fulfil its “totalizing” mission’ and peripheries. What characterizes a centre in Lefebvre’s view is simply its will to power. This can take the symbolic form of sovereignty, which can be defined in different ways, from the dynastical linking of territories, to the nation state based on a claim of cultural similarity, to the federation grounded in constitutional principles. Or it can be grounded in the ordering capacity – the governmentality – of the institutions. Centres are hegemonic, homogenizing and fracturing at the same time. While we can certainly accept the claim that centres are working under the illusion of eliminating differences, this is not all they do. In more traditional discussions of marginality, margin is not only a social construction following the logic outlined by Lefebvre. It is also a condition that can be measured through a series of indicators. To be marginal is to be below average on these indicators (for instance GDP, unemployment, level of education, growth rate, income). These mainly economic indicators do not in any way, however, explain why groups or regions have become marginal. Marginalization, which is the process through which marginality takes effect, must rely on a systemic logic of a kind. An economic system can build on exploitation, which produces inequalities. Grand theories of world-systems, of underdevelopment or of capitalism for that matter derive from the assumption that the underdeveloped areas, the peripheries, and the pre-capitalist order were a condition for and a result of the centres’ expansion (Lefebvre’s totalizing mission). A cultural community can marginalize people that are culturally different. A society functions
through norms, rituals and value systems that decide on acceptable and less than acceptable behaviour. Whether we choose to explain marginalization as an effect of a system that produces inequality, difference, exclusion or abnormality, we need to include a processual dimension. Until now the analytical concept of margin could be condensed in the following claim: it describes an asymmetrical relation deriving from a logic of centrality, which is linked to a system that produces marginality as a negative condition to be measured.

But marginalization is not simply a systemic process: it must be performed; it involves actors and institutions. Marginalization can be a strategy performed by the centre in order to demonstrate its centrality. Decisions are made that have marginalizing effects. They can be directly political, as in the case of the EU’s neighbourhood policy, which is based on a differentiation between countries that are or can become members, and countries that are treated as neighbours of the union; they can be the result of an economic system which is supported politically; or they can be caused by spatial strategies ‘that make it possible simultaneously to force worrisome groups … out towards the periphery’. In either case, the effect will be to produce or uphold margins. The strategy from the centre perspective is thus always balanced between the totalizing mission of eliminating or downplaying differences and the need for margins in order to symbolically uphold centrality. A kind of pluralism – a unity in diversity – is thus established, which links diversity to marginality. The strategy is not simply to exclude, in which case the margin would be completely external, but to create negative marginalization. If we return to the example of the European neighbourhood policy, we can say that neighbours are not just excluded; they are less than members, but more than strangers. I will return to the function of this in-between-ness in a moment.

**Positive marginality**

But we can also change perspective and look at marginalization as a strategy performed by the margin. The margin can respond or even resist. Examples of resistance are well known. So-called ghettos in urban areas can respond to marginalization by establishing alternative systems of ordering; at the symbolic level, margins can challenge the identity politics of the centre, as in the case of ethnic minorities demanding recognition of their language and more broadly their culture. Resistances are active strategies to counter the centre’s strategies. We must not forget,
however, Noel Parker’s conceptualization of margins as places ‘where the centre’s ordering capacity begins to ebb out’. In pre-modern geopolitics, such places were often defined as marches, that is, areas where the centre was not in control, and where sovereignty was less clear. This lack of control is a precondition for imagining marginality as a performative act, or what Noel Parker calls a theory of positive marginality. I will draw on his theory to add an extra dimension to the concept of margin. Positive marginality combines the structural challenge embedded in the margin (the centre needs it to establish its centrality), the waning power of the centre in the marches (there are limits to what the centre can do) and the potentials of the margin to act. To study positive marginality is thus also to study how the centre performs its centrality.

How the margin can act in various ways obviously depends on the force of the centre, and of how the margin more specifically is being constructed. Some margins are primarily constructed within a cultural discourse; other margins are defined politically or economically. At this stage, I will, however, not consider the discursive variable when discussing positive marginality. Following Parker, we can observe two general dimensions of positive marginality. One is concerned with the tactics that actors in the margin use to gain benefits from the centre. The other is of a more existential nature and concerns the articulation of identity at the margins. Tactics directly relate to margins trying to get benefits from the centre, for instance in terms of economic redistribution, or of being granted privileges, for instance in the form of special rights. If we stay within the realm of geopolitics and focus solely on the articulation of geostrategies, as Parker does, we can observe how regions will try to navigate in a geopolitical ‘geometry’ with positions already fixed. In this perspective, regions can try to gain something from repositioning themselves. In cases where there are other centres in the geometry, a region can try to ‘play one centre off another’. One such case could be Scandia in Southern Sweden, which over recent years has been strongly engaged in setting up the Øresund region in cooperation with Copenhagen, with the goal of gaining more freedom from Stockholm.

Regions can also strengthen their bargaining power by claiming to possess a privileged access to the outside. Turkey has a long tradition of using the bridge metaphor to emphasize its links to a world beyond Europe. When preparing for a rapprochement with the EU, the Turkish government positioned Turkey as a mediator between Europe and the Middle East. More recently the Erdogan government has used this position to gain economic benefits from Europe by stopping refugees traveling to Europe through Turkey. Both the tactics of playing off centres and
of placing oneself in the role of mediator demand a capacity to manoeuvre around similarities and differences. Actors performing marginal tactics in Malmö can choose to highlight the similarities with Denmark and construct a new common region, which might even become a new economic powerhouse. In Turkey, people have long experience of using the bridge metaphor to emphasize not only being connected to other parts of the world, but also representing more worlds and more cultures. Apart from navigating between two centres inside a specific geometry, or navigating between an inside and an outside, there is at least one more tactical move to be performed by a margin, namely, to imitate the centre and thus eliminate differences. This imitation can be made in order to appear ‘familiar, reliable, and easy to deal with’ as when Central European actors have selectively appropriated Western values to become more visible. In this latter case, differences are toned down in order to appear centre-like. The three tactics are presented in Figure 3.1.

There are doubtlessly more tactics of positive marginality to be considered. We can for instance imagine a margin emphasizing the differences from its centre and appealing to an international institution like the UN for protection. This tactic has been used by indigenous people coming together under the heading of the fourth world and arguing against discrimination and exploitation from the centres to which they are connected.

Even if tactics might seem more instrumental and interest-oriented, they tend to slip over into value-oriented actions. Margins that are not embedded in larger identity constructions will appear weaker and less robust. The many political debates about the situation of poorer and less developed regions within a country have clearly demonstrated how margins fare badly without identity politics. If we look at positive marginality as identity politics, we immediately have to leave out those cases where a margin is perceived negatively by those belonging to it. We know that young people especially are drawn to cities because they want to live what they consider a more modern lifestyle. Rural areas are perceived as traditional and backward. Although migration is most often caused by economic push factors, the negative perceptions of the region that migrants leave certainly play a role.

Figure 3.1 Mediating between inside and outside. (Source: author).
When margins act tactically they try to gain benefits and ameliorate their bargaining power within a setting, which does not radically question the rules and discourses of marginality and centrality. Even if positive marginality involves issues of identity, the game really changes when we move into identity politics. Following Craig Calhoun, I define identity politics as a political practice which evolves around questions of identity.\(^\text{19}\) When political articulations of centrality and marginality are formed around identity we move into identity politics. Whether marginalities can be expressed clearly in identity terms depends on the resources and the discursive possibilities available. Some discourses offer a more powerful repertoire for performing positive marginality. This is the case for identities articulated in discourses of culture and ethnicity. Claiming to be culturally or ethnically different tends to build a stronger case than claiming to be economically disadvantaged. Adding territoriality to the case often makes it even stronger. Regions that are perceived as culturally and ethnically different seem to possess a larger toolbox for performing positive marginality than marginalized groups that are perceived differently.

Before discussing this toolbox at more length I will outline three main scenarios for performing positive marginality as identity politics. The first relates to claims of autonomy. Different arguments can be brought forward to claim autonomy, which again can be granted at different levels. If a margin gains a form of autonomy through special rights or self-government, its relations to the centre change. The federal state is an example of a centrality that becomes merely constitutional and symbolic. The individual states within the federation are only marginal in terms of sovereignty. The symbolic centre is typically reduced to a metonymic expression such as Berlin or Washington. In the case of the EU, where the transfer of sovereignty from the member states is even more limited than in federations, the centre, expressed metonymically as Brussels, tends simply to become an ideological construct by Eurosceptics. There are, however, many examples of margins claiming and sometimes gaining autonomy with reference to identity. These can be national or ethnic minorities with special rights in the states where they live, or regions that have acquired forms of self-government.\(^\text{20}\) A second scenario is characterized by margins directly confronting their status as marginal and claiming to be centres in their own right. In order to become a centre, a margin needs not only to mobilize resources, but also to rethink an entire geometry. If the majority of the citizens of Scotland decide to leave the UK, the centrality of the rest of the UK is directly influenced, and so is the geometry of the European Union. We have examples of states being
divided up in smaller states. In some of these cases, positive marginality was definitely performed, as with the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, where Slovakian politicians rigorously challenged ‘the pragocentrism’ of the state. By gaining independence, Slovakia could claim its own centrality. Both the Scottish and the Slovakian cases involve a high degree of identity politics. In the third scenario, the margin directly challenges the centrality of the centre by imitating it, or by competitive emulation as Parker calls it. The margin thus claims centrality not only by imitating the centre, but also by arguing that it is more central than the centre. This involves two operations at the same time. The margin must negate the differences from the centre (imitation) and even claim to be expressing the centrality in a better way than the centre. We have seen examples of this in articulations of Europeanness. In his famous article from 1984, ‘The Tragedy of Central Europe’, Milan Kundera argued that Central Europe epitomized the cultural centre of Europe, a role that Western Europe had completely discarded. Speaking of Western Europe’s acceptance of the Soviet control of Eastern Europe, he stated that ‘Europe hasn’t noticed the disappearance of its cultural home because Europe no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity’. Although the tone is pessimistic, he is arguing that Central Europe – presently marginalized by Western Europe due to the Cold War and Soviet hegemony – is in fact the centre of Europe. The rest of Europe has not only forgotten about Central Europe; it has lost its centrality.

The outside and the in-between

So far I have only discussed marginality within a simple geometry where centre and margin define each other. The geometry can, however, be made more complex. The centre does not only acquire its centrality from the existence of margins, but also by marking out the limits of its reach. As mentioned above, there might be other centres with their own margins. But what is more important here is that the centre also constructs an outside as a negation of its centrality. The margin is bound to the centre, the outside is out of reach and out of control. Where the function of the margin is to establish centrality inside, the role of the outside is to legitimize the totalizing mission.

There are several ways of conceptualizing the outside. Reinhart Koselleck has demonstrated how the idea of centrality can be given meaning by the use of asymmetrical counterconcepts that add universality to the centre. As he states, ‘a given group makes an exclusive claim to
generality, applying a linguistically universal concept to itself alone and rejecting all comparison. This kind of self-definition provokes counterconcepts which discriminate against those who have been defined as the “other”. A traditional asymmetrical counterconcept is the barbarian, who designates both the limits and the negation of civilization. The barbarian is always both less than civilized and the opposite of civilization. This figure appears in different discourses, from the wild man lingering at the fringes of orderly life and the cannibals epitomizing inhumanity to geopolitical discourses of *limes* and fortresses. The Roman Empire established its *limes* to mark the borders between imperial order and external disorder. Today the EU is trying to police the Mediterranean to avoid pressure at the gates from immigrants and refugees. Analysts have suggested that the EU’s border policies can be viewed as ‘a task of containment in the face of a world that is viewed as profoundly alien’ comparable to the ancient Roman *limes*. The barbarian and the outsider are defined as out of control. They are uncontrollable and thus dangerous. Margins can be viewed as areas where the control of the centre diminishes, but the barbarian and the outsider symbolize the complete loss of control. At times margins can be viewed as in-between zones which are closer to the outside. Since the Enlightenment, Eastern Europe has been viewed as a region which is less civilized than the West. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century geopolitics, Eastern Europe was crudely conceptualized as a buffer zone. This concept is used to designate countries as empty, in-between spaces that protect the centre from a chaotic outside. According to William Walters’ analysis of the geostrategies performed after the end of the Cold War in Europe, the buffer zone reappeared as a way to locate the Central and Eastern European countries which would insulate them from ‘chaotic spaces of the crumbling Soviet empire to the east’. In-betweenness is typically understood as a condition of being neither one nor the other. In spatial terms you are closer to the limits of Europe. This condition can also be formulated in temporal terms as not being fully European yet. Some scholars see the enlargement of the EU to the east as a process based on a threefold division of Europe into a European core, a Europe to the East which is not yet fully European, and an Eastern periphery that is excluded from being European. The same designation of in-betweenness has been used to describe the south of Europe in the wake of the refugee crisis: ‘The ‘South’, *the other Europe*, isn’t fully European as it still stands with one foot in the Third World or at any rate serves as an entry gate for the latter’. Some scholars choose to speak of margins as liminal others, borrowing from the anthropologist Victor Turner’s famous
analysis of rites of passage as being betwixt and between. While Turner viewed the liminal as a marginal and secluded phase that members of a community had to go through to be fully initiated, Morozov and Rumelili reduce it to a hybrid within identity politics characterized by being partly self/partly Other. They find this position in the different ways that Russia and Turkey manage their European identities. Liminality can thus broaden our understanding of marginality since it includes a phase of transition (in casu not being fully European), a position of hybridity (being more than one) and a position of transitory exclusion. The latter corresponds to what Turner calls ‘the essentially unstructured’ state of having nothing.

If we look at this in-betweenness from the perspective of performativity, we can say that both the outsider position and the position of being not fully within the geometry tend towards negative marginality. Because it is often dressed in harsh essentialism, the position of outsider is difficult to negotiate. Take for instance the category of immigrant, which tends to stick to one’s descendants, generation after generation. Migrants are outsiders in a situation of permanent transition. As Fatima El-Tayeb succinctly puts it: ‘migration appears as always reversible, coming with an expiration date, but at the same time stretching over several generations’. The category of immigrant designates the clearest position of the outsider trying to enter a society. Being stripped of an identity – not fully something, not simply from somewhere else – the immigrant is reduced to the outsider within. This figure is well known in imaginaries of the barbarian intruder. The Roman barbarus could appear in the shape of evil and irrationality within the Roman Empire; the vampire could migrate from a dark uncivilized Europe and contaminate the citizens of London, the most modern European metropole. The current refugee crisis in Europe has demonstrated how people fleeing to Europe from wars, failing states and poverty have become the ultimate image of the outsider, who is kept in a permanent state of in-betweenness within detention areas and camps created as ‘zones of indistinction between inclusion and exclusion’. In these ‘non-places’ and ‘nowherevilles’, the refugee is reduced to a categorical barbarian without any characteristics apart from being misplaced and dangerous.

At the other end of the scale, in-betweenness can be viewed as a position strengthening positive marginality. In a study of Afro-American female academics at American universities dominated by white males, Mary Alfred notes that marginality becomes a positive attribute, because it makes it possible for them ‘to successfully navigate their many cultural worlds’. They can thus move in and out of identities and uphold
bi-cultural competences and what Alfred calls ‘creative marginality’.\textsuperscript{38}

In their analysis of Russia and Turkey as Europe-makers, Morozov and Rumelili point to the active role of marginalized countries in affecting identity politics at the centre. As they state: ‘By projecting their own visions of Europe onto the EU, the outsiders impel the insiders to articulate the identity of Europe in a slightly different manner compared to what would be possible without this discursive intervention’.\textsuperscript{39} Turkey is thus challenging constructions of European identity that exclude Islam from Europe, and Russia questions geopolitical imaginaries of an ever-enlarging Europe. While European politicians are trying to externalize Turkey, the answer from the Turkish side could be that the country is actually contributing to European identity by supporting multiculturalism. In the case of Russia, European politicians might exclude the country based on criticism of Putin’s authoritarianism, whereas the Russian government will stress Russia’s geopolitical role in Eastern Europe.

**Discourse and identity politics**

The shaping of marginal tactics and identity politics depends on the discourses in which they are being constructed. Discourses are semantically structured around key concepts, basic concepts and semantic relations, which together with the specific scenography of positions configure nodal points and subject positions.\textsuperscript{40} Even a superficial view of conceptualizations of margin and marginality reveals a host of concepts, some of which we have already mentioned. Concepts such as savage, immigrant, outsider, liminal, fringe, edge, neighbour and hybrid are used in different discourses to denote marginality. They are linked by specific central concepts in chains of equivalences around a nodal point which fix the limits of the discourses. The stabilization of nodal points takes place in a realm of interdiscursivity where several discourses are connected and meaning is contested. Some discourse analysts speak of this process as the effort of turning nodal points into empty signifiers, which on the one hand reduces semantic complexities, and on the other hand valorizes the concept positively.\textsuperscript{41} Discursive stabilizations are, however, always challenged by new experiences and interpretations. These challenges can be explained structurally as the inherent dynamics of semiotics, or as a result of social practice. When nodal points are destabilized they turn into floating signifiers that are floating precisely because they are being contested. The tension between empty and floating signifiers is captured by what Reinhart Koselleck terms ‘basic concepts’ (Grundbegriffe), which
are at the same time inescapable within a given political and social language and always also contested. Part of discursive stabilization is to establish a scenography of different positions available for the actors. Of most importance is the subject position which determines who can be included in the perspective formed within the discourse. By fixing this position the discourse sets the condition for identification and legitimate action. A discourse where Europe is made the nodal point can thus establish the condition – the subject position – from where Europeans can be designated and others can be marginalized or excluded as not European.

As already demonstrated several times, margin and marginality can be expressed in many different ways. The two main sets of coordinates are made up by time/space and identity/resources. Margins are typically seen as spaces or even territories that are placed in a larger spatial geometry. Sometimes distance from the centre is directly taken as an indicator of marginality in what are termed distance-decay patterns. Marginality can be translated into a temporal scheme and identified with being less developed, less modern or less civilized, or it can be seen as a liminal period within a temporal continuum. The other set of coordinates relates to the character of the margin and the reasons for its marginality. A region can be viewed as marginal because it is constructed as negatively different within a value system of differences, or its marginality can be the result of unequal distribution of resources. Quite often identity and resources are brought together to explain marginality. This is the case when being different leads to forms of exclusion which bar regions from access to resources. Before I take a look at specific discourses of marginality, I need to add a final set of coordinates. Marginality can also be used to characterize specific groups or individuals within a society. Being marginalized means being at a distance from the norms and conventions within a society. Again the coordinates often overlap, as when ethnic groups are categorized and marginalized through identity markers (language, religion and culture).

If we now return to the question of marginality in discourses of Europe, we will have to identify nodal points and chains of equivalences. Even if we can speak of Europe in many ways, the notion of Europe as a continent in a discourse that makes Europe as a continent the nodal point is incredibly long-lived. The reason is that the concept of continent can very easily be connected to concepts which are meta-geographical. Ever since Herodotus referred to Europe as also a myth and a race, Europe has been perceived as more than a continent. This concept certainly also influences our understanding of marginality within discourses of Europe. Margins are typically placed at the edges of a European centre. With the
emergence of states in the sixteenth century, Europe became a geopolitical space configured around the nodal point of power balance, which turns margins into smaller states, buffer zones and controlled areas. The expansionist drive of larger European states and empires reduced parts of Europe to an outsider position under their control. The political space, however, merged with perceptions of Europe as a Christian community (respublica Christiana) and later with robust ideologies of civilization. The expansion of the centre could thus be justified as a civilizing mission into less civilized lands. Larry Wolff has masterfully demonstrated how Enlightenment travellers adventured into the ever more uncivilized East. This intra-European orientalism turned Eastern Europe into a cultural margin of Europe. The same marginalization took place in the north of Europe and in the far west.

Europe as a civilization became a dominant discourse and ideology in the eighteenth century, but this was soon challenged by the dominant discourse of national culture and the ideology of nationalism. In fact, since the eighteenth century, discourses on Europe have to a large degree been shaped by the tension between a universalizing European civilization and particular national cultures. Even if the discourse of European civilization in the nineteenth century began to include perceptions of pan-European culture, it was constantly challenged by the centripetal force of nationalism. In fantasies produced by Europeanists like Coudenhove-Kalergi, civilization and pan-European culture were even connected to geopolitical dreams of a semi-imperialist Europe nourished by African colonies. The nationalization of culture within nationalism would, however, not exclude perceptions of European margins. The overarching force of a civilizational discourse in the centre, whether in the form of economic and political liberalism or Europeanism, would still leave room for harsh asymmetries between European nations. After World War I, large parts of Eastern and Central Europe were still marginalized through the forms of orientalism that accompanied the civilizational discourse. Marginalization of ‘the other Europe’ continued after World War II and the Cold War division of Europe. The consecutive enlargements of the European Common Market and later the European Union brought the older margins closer to the economic and cultural centre of Europe, but did not cancel out forms of marginalization. Turkey remained a kind of border zone, defined in cultural terms as less European and geopolitically as being in between Europe and the Middle East. Southern Europe has been pushed back into a liminal status due to the recent euro-crisis, which produced a divide between the economically and thus supposedly morally more advanced and the less
advanced. The status of Southern Europeans was partly determined by stereotypical views of less responsible and less productive southerners.\textsuperscript{50} The current refugee crisis in Europe has amply demonstrated that the most culturally marginalized are those without lands. Peoples on the move inside Europe have traditionally been the most marginalized of all, since they find themselves outside the standard national templates of culture and identity. The Roma people are a case in point here.\textsuperscript{51} But most marginalized of all are the people trying desperately to reach Europe from the war-torn Middle East or the dramatically impoverished African continent. In some discourses, the whole of Europe becomes a centre – a fortress – protecting itself against the invasion at its borders. From a different perspective, the outsiders are putting pressure on the political centre of Europe and, in fact, enforcing the internal marginalization of Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia). The impossibility within the EU of sharing the responsibility for accommodating migrants and refugees forced these states to undermine the Dublin regulation and let people move further north. This immediately led to increased charges of Southern irresponsibility.

**Margins speaking back**

I have argued that marginality can sometimes be used as a tactic to rock the geometry of centre and margin. Tactics will have to be framed within discourses oriented by specific nodal points and key concepts. The recent crisis scenario in Europe (the euro crisis, the Russian crisis, Brexit, the rise of right-wing populism, the refugee crisis) is providing a context for new marginal tactics. Centres are being challenged in different ways. When tactics move into the sphere of identity politics framed by discourses of culture and civilization, they become powerful tools in changing existing geometries. Following Brexit, the Scottish Nationalist Party is preparing the road for leaving one union to join another, with a forceful rhetoric of independence. Pressured by harsh requirements from the EU in order to receive loans that would avoid a financial breakup of the Greek state, the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, responded by organizing a referendum and delivering a speech in which he reiterated the claim that Greece always has been the historical centre of Europe and took on the subject position of speaking in the name of Europe’s future: ‘The crucial choice of the Greek people today concerns the future of Europe, as well as the future of Greece … They [the Greek people] will seize this moment in history and will send a strong message across Europe, a strong message
of dignity worldwide’. By speaking in the name of European democracy against the undemocratic and brutal measures of the centre, Tsipras tried to use Greece’s historical aura to portray the policies of the EU – and particularly Germany – as un-European.

From a rather different political perspective, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, also spoke in the name of Europe. In a defensive reaction against attempts to introduce quotas for refugees among EU member states, he argued that Hungary was saving European culture from the outsiders: ‘Can we shelter people, many of whom are unwilling to accept European culture, or who come here with the intent of destroying European culture? How did we lose and how can we regain the common European homeland to which every nation of the Union – including the Greeks and the Germans – can say “yes”?’ By drawing up a catastrophic scenario in which Europe as we know it is disappearing, Orbán is able – rhetorically – to move Hungary from a more marginal position to the centre. As we have seen, this move reminds us of former attempts – for instance Kundera’s – to oppose a European culture firmly embedded in Central Europe to a more superficial Western civilization. Marginal identity politics within Europe are contributing to a changing geometry which in the end might challenge existing centres. But we have also seen many examples of marginal performances without any effect on the centre. Ukraine’s failed efforts to become a margin that matters for Europe is a clear-cut example of an outsider that never made it into the liminal position of neighbour. Neither are ‘the expanded margins of Europe’s former colonies’ in the form of the migrants that have come to Europe over the last 150 years in a position to perform much positive marginality, even if they have influenced the everyday life of European societies. Some margins are thus able to speak back and play with their centres, while others are silenced and trapped in negative marginality.

Notes

38. Mary Alfred, ‘Reconceptualizing Marginality from the Margins’.
45. Larry Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe.